

## ETHNOMUSICOLOGISTS RESEARCHING TOWNS THEY LIVE IN: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL QUERIES FOR A RENEWED DISCIPLINE

**Abstract:** This article focuses on theoretical and methodological implications of the 20th-century epistemic turn in the humanities towards a more self-critical and politicized approach to the production of knowledge in academia. It examines in particular their general impact on ethnography-based disciplines such as ethnomusicology, arguing that this is felt even more intensely in work being done in the cities the researchers live in, where their home institutions are based. The article then addresses methodological alternatives for ethnomusicology in the rather conflicting 21<sup>st</sup> century context, such as participatory-action strategies eliciting new grounds for collaboration between academic and extra-academic perspectives, based on ongoing initiatives undertaken by an academic research collective in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which integrate political and academic dimensions in new disciplinary ways.

**Key words:** urban studies, music ethnography, participatory-action research, politics in knowledge-building.

Ethnomusicologists working in towns in the early second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had to come to terms with well-established disciplinary canons and research models, stressing the vantage point of the outsider doing fieldwork in demographically small, isolated social settings framed as communities, i.e. implying a relatively stable and widely shared worldview among its members. While urban studies among “complex societies” would progressively claim relevance equivalent to conventional research in relatively remote areas, the ideological and methodological problems posed by their “new object” were usually dealt with, as we shall see further in this paper, through early anthropological common practice in rural or even more isolated contexts. This may perhaps be succinctly presented as an activity centered on participant observation of a small-scale society, from an outsider’s supposedly neutral point of view, producing data in a relatively short time, to be analyzed in a culture-sensitive way, and to be presented in an acceptable form of academic interpretation.

The 1980’s epistemic turn in anthropology and its related ethnography-centered disciplines has timely criticized the empirically couched fantasies and ensuing allegories surrounding these fields of knowledge (Clifford 1981, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986),

pointing out their failure to produce real engagement with the researched social bodies in their actual struggles, thus bound to represent them in a misleading and politically disengaged concept of time, the “ethnographic present” (Fabian 1985).

Since their initial encounters with non-Western cultural formations, Western scholars were faced with the task of assessing the degree to which non-verbal sound expressions foreign to their own did or did not conform to notions of “music” and of “musical system” held in the West (Blum 1991). The recent history of academic fields such as musicology and ethnomusicology record the growing literature devoted to critically dealing with the implicit prejudicial postures in this approach and with the shortcomings of its results, sometimes generating even more prejudice and misconceptions about the dynamics of cultural diversity around the world (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). But, for better or for worse, a great deal of literature has been accumulated in ethnomusicology and its related fields on the *a priori* assumption that understanding the musical “Other” be among its ultimate goals. This premise has moved several young music students from selected countries in Western Europe and from the United States to start their respective research activity in places and among peoples distant and, at least apparently, “different” from their own locales, a move authorized by their training and research centers of origin, and thus conferring a legitimacy stamp on their own competence and job candidacies.

Approaching this situation from today’s standpoint, the geopolitical grounds and asymmetrical power relations sustaining this trend seem to have been thoroughly and repeatedly brought into question in ethnography-based disciplines, ethnomusicology included (e.g. Barz and Cooley 1997), but it is key to this paper elaborating further, both theoretically and empirically, one significant outcome of this major break in politico-intellectual terms: bringing home ethnomusicology to the urban contexts researchers live in demands addressing the ethical-political dimension of research in new, academically reinvigorating theoretical and methodological grounds.

This article thus examines these theoretical and methodological implications of working “at home”, based on the potentials and dilemmas arising in two ongoing research projects being developed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Both experiences have been conducted through collaboration between an academic collective and non-governmental, grass-root organizations, in both cases aiming to raise the local population’s levels of social inclusion and socio-political consciousness through education in neighborhoods assaulted by daily social violence, drug traffic and social exclusion. Situating historically the emergence of an “urban ethno-

musicology”, and grounding the argument on the writer’s simultaneous experience as a researcher and, more recently, as a public sector policy maker in the city he lives, Rio de Janeiro, one will argue the need for acknowledging the political dimension of academic research, rethinking its theoretical implications, and developing methodological answers which affect profoundly the involved research institutions and the public sphere in general.

### ***“At home” in a big city; a few initial guidelines***

The central question in this paper stems from the history of ethnographic disciplines such as anthropology and ethnomusicology, located in their dramatic focus shift from studying social bodies framed as relatively small in demographic terms, culturally close-knit, and isolated from industrial civilization paradigms, into working in predominantly industrialized urban settings, with mobile individuals experiencing more fluid, interchangeable and eventually contradictory social identities. By contrast, ethnomusicology’s early emphasis on exotic “musical systems” was a product of its own enclosure in research frameworks based in industrialized cosmopolitan centers, and was therefore, more than just a strategic emphasis, its ideological dependence upon impressionistic, empirical or, as often expressed, symbolical “data”. The emphasis on such principles and procedures paid little attention, if any, to embedded political and/or material interests, explicitly or implicitly deemed to be absent or irrelevant in non-industrialized, primitive or non-capitalist social forms. Exotic behavior and ideas were thus framed as starting challenges to disciplining the world’s diversity from the academic viewpoint nurtured in urban industrialized settings in Europe and its satellite social formations around the globe.

The first musical ethnographies within industrialized urban settings<sup>1</sup> have typically focused on migrant ethnic/national enclaves, highlighting adaptation processes which included rural-to-urban, language, occupational, and behavioral shifts, and aimed at discriminating what changes or not in each specific process. At a certain point in time, there have been attempts to draw workable taxonomies and legitimize coherent in-

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<sup>1</sup> John Blacking’s brief and rather ironical assessment of studying “one’s own front yard”, as opposed to casting light on otherwise forgotten or “disappearing” musical cultures, in his posthumously published interview (Howard 1991) may be taken as a relatively concise and representative reaction to this trend. Implicitly in his argument, however, were the supposedly contrasting the “pains of socio-spatial displacement” with the “comfort” of carrying research within a relatively close distance from one’s place of residence, being able to develop conversation in the researcher’s mother tongue, sharing of ideological views on all-embracing national issues etc.

terpretations allowing broader generalization among the myriad of study cases emerging since the late 1960s and 70s (see for instance Nettl 1978, 1985; Kartomi 1981). These were timely articulated with higher-level theories of change being produced in the social sciences on the verge of intense political events affecting the heart of industrialist countries on all sides of the broader political spectrum, such as the Vietnam War, the Parisian student/worker barricades, the US Civil Rights protests, the Prague Spring, or the South African anti-apartheid movement.

This state of affairs, however, would only gradually produce a more profound and widespread impact on ethnography-oriented disciplines, although it can be sensed earlier in cases such as the heterodox, interdisciplinary combination of sociology, anthropology and the humanities in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1958, 1962; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964) and his associates. For the most part, urban ethnomusicology continued to use derivations from older “pastoral” methods and descriptive apparatuses, following the still dominant empiricism in anthropological theories of change, while only expanding academic legitimacy to objects until then either neglected or even deemed predatory, such as mass-consumed popular music, some of which was based on repertoires created within small-scale social groups, now distilled through relatively standardized industrial procedures.

Being a world discipline under the hegemony of US institutions, ethnomusicology had to face a hard call in the 1980s, when anthropology in general, but particularly a number of its practitioners in North America itself, unveiled a new level of challenges to the canons inherited in colonialist center-periphery relations. This emerging self-criticism raised not a few exalted responses from established authorities in all ethnographic fields, but it became evident that alternatives to older disciplinary indexes, such as the sole authority of the ethnographer, the centrality of cultural translation between an idealized Us vs. a stereotyped Other, or the empiricist attempts to produce grounds of objectivity in social analysis, were already in place around the world, including Latin America. One particular outcome of such a disciplinary shift to be highlighted here was a critique of the epistemic virtue of socio-spatial distancing between researchers and researched, or, as one shall argue, between politically legitimized subjects and objects in social research (see, for a counter-hegemonic Latin American perspective, Fals Borda 2000).

One problem, however, persisted in such critique, namely the reification of a hardly conceivable “anthropological practice”, as if the many practices still claiming links to an anthropological tradition might be addressed as a relatively unified theoretical and methodological entity. In other words, the US-centered “self-criticism” was clearly unable to take

full account of the variety of foundations and approaches then available worldwide. Summarizing the argument above, it is time to ask whether or not the challenges of so-called post modern anthropology actually managed to offer new research models and frameworks (Hale 2007).

### *Ethnomusicologists working in cities they live in*

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ethnomusicologists started paying attention to migrant communities in cities, following these populations' increasing activism for socio-cultural rights. This produced a parallel focus shift in ethnomusicological studies, casting light on the socio-musical implications of displacement and adaptation. As suggested by Bruno Nettl (1978), while the new object of study demanded shifting conceptual frameworks (for instance, moving away from emphasis on social stability to highlighting social change), due to evident intersections and negotiations with the researcher's own cultural backgrounds, the approaches adopted in these cases mirrored the intercultural techniques (distanced participant observation, non-evaluation, culturally sensitive translation etc.) of by then standardized research work in rural and more remote areas. The latter was (and, in fact, still is) the case when the research is carried out in a city—or, for methodology's sake, any place—other than the one in which the researcher lives. In this situation, the researcher still experiences, even if only as part of his/her imagination (Anderson 2006), a sense of distance, as if the evident negotiations with his/her own cultural backgrounds were not also implicated by his/her own presence. This becomes, however, progressively more difficult as the researcher deals with individuals or social bodies that live in the same urban area and are also engaged in many of the processes the researcher him- or herself is also involved in on a daily basis, and not only for a few months or a couple of years, but for indefinite periods, sometimes an entire lifetime.

If taking up the urban context itself as a research object already puts at stake some of the pillars of ethnographic disciplines, carrying research in the city one lives in certainly challenges standard ethnographic principles and methods even further. This statement, however, should deserve closer scrutiny, since in not a few instances class-divided, multiethnic, and populous urban contexts will present challenges to one's understanding in many aspects comparable to the challenges posed by spatially remote, demographically smaller, and apparently close-knit social formations. For instance, in both cases the researcher's mother tongue, or his/her day-to-day differential use of a language only generally shared in some with key interlocutors, may not only be understood as a hard-to-follow sound sequence but also as an immediately recognizable, oppressive communicatory medium in an urban context, no matter what the

content of a specific conversation is. The same rings true for body postures, dress codes or musical tastes, aspects which tend to be neutralized as politically charged indexes in far away situations, placing the researcher in a more fragile position vis-à-vis his/her interlocutors.

One point, however, should be clear: a simple inversion of a worn-out model is not being naively argued for here, i.e. living in the places one researches is an unconditional asset, not a hindrance, to “objectivity”, and therefore academically trained researchers who do not live in the areas they study are peremptorily condemned to superficiality in their social analyses. The claim here is that, whatever their objects are, researchers, in a strictly critical sense, should be aware from the start of the implications of “being or not being there”, as an index of engagement for good or worse. As much as there is nothing neutral about academic researchers’ methods and actions in the field, as claimed by post-modern anthropology and its related fields (Hale 2007), there is nothing neutral either about the act of thinking reflexively upon reality and its many unfolding questions (Araujo 2008).

In not a few instances so far, ethnomusicologists working in the cities they live in (e.g. Reyes-Schramm 1987, Shelemay 1988, 2008, Cragnolini 1999, Araujo 2006, Reyes-Schramm and Hemetek 2007) have manifested their own negotiations of place and agency within the research processes they were engaged in. The many, and often intricate, political issues at stake in each of these demonstrate the limitations of short-term research goals in long-term processes as well as the potentials of newer research frameworks for inflecting new theoretical and methodological directions in ethnomusicology. The latter may include distinct, but sometimes combined, forms of collaboration between academics and non-academics, such as organizing festivals (Hemetek 2007), jointly carried research and co-authorship of research publications (Araujo 2006a, 2006b), developing public policies, short or long-term advocacy work in legal or paralegal claims (Impey 2002, Newsome 2008), fostering participation in academic forums (Silva *et al* 2008) etc.

While academic/non-academic collaboration is an unequivocally growing trend in ethnomusicology,<sup>2</sup> there is by no means a consensus, even among its practitioners, about whether or not it may be considered as legitimate, i.e. knowledge-producing, research, quite often being cast, if not derisively outcast, as an “outreach” or “educational”

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the establishment of an Applied Ethnomusicology Sections within the Society for Ethnomusicology, in North America, and of an Applied Ethnomusicology Study Group within the International Council for Traditional Music.

activity.<sup>3</sup> The term “applied” has been an index that the actual “knowledge” was produced elsewhere, either in the university or in its “object” communities, and not in the collaboration itself. In contrast, it has been argued (Araujo 2008) that even research apparently kept silent in selected library shelves is “applied”, if only to limited goals.

If the status of knowledge in contemporary ethnomusicology is to be displaced from older romantic and modern ideals of “objectivity” (Pelinski 2000), the discipline should make room for more radical stakes at self-criticism, overcoming its claims to neutrality (Araujo 2008), and engaging in new experiments in intracultural research (Nettl 2004), facing its many internal dilemmas in interaction with its many interlocutors worldwide.

Facing this necessity for new research equations able to address more properly the challenges inherent in the post-modern era, Pelinski (2000) outlines at least seven basic premises: 1) acknowledging continuums between territorialized and deterritorialized music as well as between its virtual and real contexts of production, diffusion and consumption, allowing new identity formations to emerge; 2) reconceptualizing musical ethnography, moving away from “field collecting” and from unveiling native taxonomies and systems, toward reflexivity, scrutinizing the relationships between researchers and the social bodies they study; 3) also moving away from studying the “foreign Other” towards studying the “Other among us”, in the fractures of hegemonic social formations, with emphasis on cultures substantially experienced by the researcher (one might add, oftentimes in his/her own locale); 4) accounting for the crisis of ethnographic authority, always asking “who represents whom”, and for the new politics of representation demanding the identification of authors’ subject position; 5) deploying polyphonic textures in the text, by juxtaposing different, and eventually contradictory, positions on key issues; 6) writing collaborative texts, involving co-authorships and multiple negotiations with other social actors implicated in the study; 7) intensifying interdisciplinary approaches.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This writer himself has been confronted, in not a few opportunities, with this posture being taken by some distinguished colleagues even after seeing/hearing blind-reviewed presentations by heterodox (academic/non-academic) research collectives within, say, “exclusive” academic forums worldwide.

<sup>4</sup> It is not my intent here to confront Pelinski’s suggestion that interdisciplinary studies represent a response to the discredit of totalizing theories, but only to suggest that interdisciplinary approaches were instrumental to the discredited theories he seems to be referring to, allowing us to think that both approaches and theories, now subject to unprecedented interrogations, may evolve toward more significant stages of formulation.

Anthropologist Charles R. Hale (2007) has also reminded us how simultaneously difficult and stimulating the researcher's experience in collaboration with extra-academic social bodies may be, comprising for themselves conflicting interests, some of which will eventually conflict with the researcher's training and expectations. In practice, he argues such conflicts quite often emerge as the politically charged interests of extra-academic social bodies eventually collide with postulates of objectivity and neutrality, embedded as icons of legitimacy in academic practice from undergraduate training to funding committees in research sponsoring agencies. As suggested by Hale, the role of an "activist anthropology" in this case, is not only to point out the political implication present in every act of knowledge but also to establish the theoretical and methodological quality leap offered by active involvement with social reality through collaboration. In his own words:

...we [in the US] have sought and imagined a relationship of neat convergence between anthropologists and our allies. When contradictions have arisen, they have been cause for disillusionment, frustration, and even abandonment of the effort. Alternatively, I contend that activist anthropology yields better research outcomes precisely because its practitioners are obliged to live and engage these contradictions to a greater extent than are those who practice conventional research methods. (Hale 2007: 104-105)

This situation tends to present truly dramatic challenges both to the stability and recognition of collaborative experiments, but it cannot be obliterated in a globally integrated political scene, and much less in stances, such as research in the researcher's home city, which have various interacting subjects (researchers, communities, institutions) as politically interested actors in long-term social processes. New research subjects, interdisciplinary strategies, multi-individual and multi-institutional collaboration, changes in institutional practices, the creation of new institutions, but above all macro-political awareness of asymmetries, hierarchies and exploitation, are key to this major reappraisal of theory and practice.

The proximity and long-term interaction between academic researchers and their non-academic interlocutors, even if just tacitly so, puts further steady pressures on the premises and actual manifestations of academic commitment to the individual and social bodies they work with, demanding both intellectual and material action, not usually exercised exclusively within the relative safety of academic environments. It also demands close attention to a myriad of interests, alliances and strategies being constantly recreated in fast-changing, complex contexts, revealing the urgency of unorthodox methodological experiments in tune with more



politically sensitive theoretical directions in human sciences. In the next sections one such experiment will open itself to readers' responses.

### ***Grounding theory and method in a study case***

Comprising senior researchers and both graduate- and undergraduate-level student assistants, the Ethnomusicology Laboratory at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, this academic unit was offered partnerships by two local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as a consequence of previous internal reflection and a series of open public debates it had promoted on the relationships between university-trained researchers and their interlocutors in music research contexts. Both NGOs, the Centro de Estudos e Ações Solidárias da Maré (CEASM, Center for Studies and Solidarity Actions of Maré), since 2003, and the Instituto Trabalho e Cidadania (ITC, Work and Citizenship Institute), since 2006, had been directing their respective actions to distinct, and spatially distant *favela* populations respectively: Maré, Rio's second largest *favela* conglomerate, and, in the ITC surroundings, two smaller hillside *favelas* in the North Zone neighborhood of Tijuca, Salgueiro and Formiga, both historically known as referential areas for samba practice. While CEASM has maintained a stronger focus on educational and cultural activities, ITC has emphasized professional training for youngsters. The terms of these partnerships have varied according to circumstances such as local history and the political situation since collaboration with the university started (see Araújo *et al* 2006a, 2006b; Araujo 2008; Barros and Silva 2008), but both initiatives aimed to establish locally based, joint research groups, comprising a majority of people residing in the *favelas* and a smaller number of non-resident graduate and undergraduate students from the university. The resident researchers were selected, in the Maré area, from a team of undergraduate and high school students, and, in Salgueiro and Formiga, from high and junior high school students. Following Paulo Freire's (1970) principles of participatory knowledge-building the non-residents in each situation, undergraduate and graduate students trained in more conventional research and more familiar with the academic literature, were asked to act first as facilitators of basic discussions among each group at large (about 27 people at Maré, about 12 at Salgueiro and Formiga). This involved asking questions as deceptively simple such as "what is music for you?" or "what have you been listening to lately?" to asking what residents found interesting in locally available music, or showing, and having a discussion on, videos focusing on some kind of musical activity, either shot in the surroundings or depicting a relatively distant reality.

Despite not being familiar with academic discussions on the power of representation, or on the discursive struggles of post-modernity, the participants in these activities caught very rapidly the complexity of the process they were entering into, and the results in terms of verbal discussion were in both experiences meager for several months. Living oppressive daily experiences, in between crossfire in their marginalized residential areas, and subject to almost complete abandonment from societal alternatives, very few people adventured a reflexive commentary in the initial months, beyond expected immediate reactions (laughing, sighing etc.). Meanwhile, two non-resident graduate students, who acted as the main facilitators in each of the two research contexts, paid careful attention to all reactions and participatory strategies arising in each of the joint group meetings. Their impressions were eventually transformed into field notes which fed methodological discussions among facilitators and project coordinator in the interstices between the two weekly general group meetings. The content of such discussions might vary, for instance, from highlighting a more detailed analysis of a dance party provided by a resident to the war-ridden invasion one of the *favelas* by a given drug gang, which would seldom appear openly in the general discussions within the group-at-large. From these observations, the university-based mediators would design, in agreement with the project coordinator (this writer), strategies for the upcoming group meeting, either going back to previously discussed matters, asking new apt questions about them not raised before, or moving on to new issues, after grounding them on the previous discussions.

Since “significant silence” (Freire 1970) was broken in each of the research contexts, through initially short interventions, and progressively through live discussions which increasingly reframed the participation of foreign mediators in its time and nature<sup>5</sup>, differences within each group were never entirely dissipated but constructively juxtaposed, to a possible extent.<sup>6</sup> The internal relationships between members of this social microcosm ranged from initial distrust to changing alliances, and so have the relationships between the individuals who take part in the research group and the available sound spectrum around them.

One concrete fieldwork experience may illustrate this process. Our initially open-issue group discussions gave space for the identification of

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<sup>5</sup> The mediators had obviously less time for speaking as the other members in the group started to provoke discussions among the group at large, and their interventions tended to offer alternatives at given impasses, such as lack of more information on a given issue or moderating group fragmenting conflicts.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult, at times impossible, to reconcile opposing positions within a collective whose main challenge is to remain as such in a society divided by unequal shares of property and power, along not only class criteria but also racial and sexual ones.

a few major themes (generative themes in Paulo Freire's own terms), such as the hegemonic musical representations of *favelas* as violent places, divided by opposing gangs' rulings, imposing ostensive constraints on the appropriation of the social space by dwellers. As discussions developed in the general meetings, the group eventually identified and explored through scarce video sources on local cultural history the historical importance for Maré of neighborhood-based Carnival societies known in Rio as *blocos carnavalescos*, as significant instances of dwellers' social organization. The majority of these local societies were no longer active, except for one, Gato de Bonsucesso, which had attempted to grow into a more ambitious Carnival association, becoming a samba school (*escola de samba*), but the general sense, even among its members, was that it was never actually capable of capitalizing adherence among Maré dwellers at large, due primarily to the latent restrictions to circulation in a context of extreme violence (see Duque 2007).

The Maré research team's first field research experience in this locally based samba school exposed these issues in many ways: a) its location ridden by one specific drug gang was interpreted as a more than potential threat to participants living in other communities ridden by other gangs; b) in such context, having community youngsters with two digital video cameras and one digital audio recorder for interviews was something to be negotiated directly with the samba school directorship, certainly giving a start to other presumable negotiations, never tangible though to the research team itself; c) the samba school's festive rehearsals for Carnival began by 11 pm, and lasted until 6 am the next day, while the majority of the research group were minors (i.e. below 18 years of age), raising justified concerns among the latter's parents and relatives, some of whom refused to sign the individual authorizations jointly prepared and signed by the university and its partner organization; d) some of the research group members themselves kept moral/religious opposition to participation in samba, demonstrating the degree to which the term "community" was a category not always to be taken for granted in social analyses of *favelas*. The group involvement was difficult but, in the end, secured and, if it cannot be said that all obstacles were removed, none of them was left untouched in the internal discussions, in a few cases leading to the reversal of too close positions. These obstacles led the group to deepen its collective grasp of how complex the situation was, and perhaps the more significant result of all was that accomplishing the team-worked research goals opened a new ground for future participation to those group members who did not take part at all in the first collective research experience.

Later after Carnival, the samba school directorship asked our team to show to a small internal audience the unedited videos shot during rehearsals and the Carnival parade. Since the show was over, some of the directors criticized some of the shots made by the initiating researchers, many of whom they knew as their neighbors, for ignoring many points of interest which were not documented at all and for highlighting aspects of no interest to a fine samba school performance. They then suggested giving the research team a preparatory “course” in samba school operational procedures the following year, so that our work could help them to improve their performance. Another idea, they added, was that the samba school could create an internal research department, more or less like ours and with our help, to keep up with the group memory but, above all, to allow the prevention of further “errors” in Carnival competitions. Although the preparation did not occur in the following year as we expected, our research team followed some of its notes taken the year before when documenting the samba school once again. As the samba school directorship eventually changed from one group to a rival one, many of the potentials arising in these interactions halted before they could develop into new grassroots-up research initiatives, but in our research team the power of participatory-action strategies to subvert apparently accommodated worldviews became clear to all participants.

It is also important to stress here that this all too sensitive process, which has been affecting this expanding collaborative work for almost nine years now, strongly depended on the previously negotiated relationships between the university and its partner NGO, and on the fact that the research team is associated with two institutions established in the same city, both remaining not only accountable for their joint actions but also easily mutually reachable at any crucial point in the process.

### ***From activism in punctual collaboration to public policy***

A final aspect to be considered here, regarding the ethnomusicologist’s engagement in researching the city he/she lives in, is that the commitment to transform as a closer reality through reflexive activism (Fals Borda 2000, Hale 2007) may demand assuming new capacities which defy academic interpretation, to demonstrate its pertinence amidst often conflicting power struggles. Since January, 2009, I took office in the coordination of music projects—including performance, research and education—at the Secretary of Culture in the newly elected city government of Rio de Janeiro, an enormous challenge, but simultaneously a unique opportunity to put into practice, as public policy, the principles and methods worked out through the Ethnomusicology Lab’s isolated projects here in Rio. Amidst several of the coordination’s actions cur-

rently in progress, I will highlight here just two, both for their ongoing and prospective relationships with the previous discussion, and for establishing links between post-modern critical tendencies in the humanities, participatory-action strategies and public sector work.

The Secretary of Culture runs a Reference Center for *Carioca* Music, created by the previous administration in 2005 around the idea of promoting one of Rio's more reverberating ideological constructs: its "distinct and world distinguished"<sup>7</sup> music. As resetting the Center's goals and policies was among the attributions of the music coordination office, the first initiative was to align it with activist ethnomusicology principles and methods, calling inevitably to question its originating ideological fabrication. The newly nominated director then reoriented its documentation activity<sup>8</sup> toward conceptual and methodological collaboration with musical documentation initiatives, completed or in progress, by institutions and individuals relevant to discussing the city, its people, its past, present and future times, its boundaries, potentials and dilemmas. The joint research teams working in the previously punctual projects in partnerships with the university were promptly asked by the Center's new director to establish a theoretical and methodological collaboration to feed the planning more encompassing public policies to allow new collaborations with other groups not yet engaged in participatory-action research.

Simultaneously, the Secretary of Education is launching in the first semester of 2009, with help from the Secretary of Culture, a full-time program in the municipal elementary school system (ages 4 to 14), currently based on a part-time (either morning or afternoon) schedule. Encompassing initially 150 schools in areas with the lowest Human Development Indexes<sup>9</sup> in the city, this program will offer "cultural workshops" directed by regular teacher and experienced community members to fulfill the newly enlarged school schedule. Taking part in the joint governmental team working out the pilot program, and on the basis the Ethnomusicology Laboratory's accumulated experience I suggested the inclusion of a musical documentation workshop for ages 12-14, aimed at mapping out and reflecting upon the musical diversity around the students' locales. This may be conducted by any interested school teacher

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<sup>7</sup> *Carioca* is originally, and curiously, an indigenous term for "Non-Indian foreigner" or "white man", significantly resignified to mean the opposite: "native from Rio de Janeiro". In conformity with a century-long socially produced construct, samba, *bossa nova* and *choro* were the mainstay genres picked to be highlighted by the Center.

<sup>8</sup> Previously limited to video- and audio-documenting stage shows in its own space.

<sup>9</sup> An index adopted by the United Nations Development Program in 1990 derived from a combination of economic, educational and health indicators.

or community member and may occupy diversified spaces, not demanding either previous specialized training in music or special accommodation, not usually available within or close to public schools. The Reference Center, in turn, will be ready to act as a collaborating instance according to the decentralized school reference centers' particular needs (training, equipment loans, seminars etc.).

### ***Final considerations***

Ethnomusicologists working in towns they live in should be as aware as and responsive to the ongoing politics of representation and fieldwork as those working in contexts spatially distant from their own. However, by living closer to their interlocutors, the former will be asked permanently and often dramatically not only to write reflexively on but also to act incisively with the concrete social bodies and individuals who directly or indirectly feed their research. In the history of ethnography-based disciplines this was initially framed as a double-sided demand, by assuming an implicit divide between, on one hand, the “actually academic”, knowledge-producing work and, on the other, the ethical-political grounds of an implicit alliance between researchers and their interlocutors, often resulting in parallel forms of activism leaving the “research itself” untainted, so to speak,. This equation was timely called into question by critical tendencies in ethnography-related fields, as a pastoral allegory that maintained intact a tendency to reify the complex realities in focus, while maintaining the privileges of the informed university-educated outsider.

Ethnographic studies of urban realities, and noticeably those undertaken in towns where the researchers themselves live, have offered then an avenue of possibilities for one to exercise reflexivity and socio-political engagement, not as split aspects of knowledge-building, but as a single process to be experienced reciprocally in theory and method as a knowledge-producing praxis.

Comprising stable and long-term cooperation of academics and non-academic residents in a single research collective, all of whom live in the same city, share some views on their territory, while simultaneously confronting each other on given aspects of reality, participatory-action strategies such as the ones outlined above open a number of new perspectives on the representation of social bodies and their praxis in texts, the engaged substance of research, and the political dimension of academic work. By taking up the challenges and risks implicit in these processes one should be equally open and prepared to assume new social roles, and working in the public sector is just one possibility, demanding

qualified reflexive knowledge to take an active part in broader processes, deepening and refining, instead of compromising, its critical premises.

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ЕТНОМУЗИКОЛОЗИ ИСТРАЖУЈУ ГРАДОВЕ  
У КОЈИМА ЖИВЕ; ТЕОРИЈСКА И МЕТОДОЛОШКА  
ПИТАЊА ЗА ОБНОВЉЕНУ ДИСЦИПЛИНУ  
(Резиме)

Етномузиколози који истражују у градовима у другој половини XX века били су у прилици да превазиђу старије парадигме своје дисциплине, у којој је истицано преимућство „аутсајдера“ који обавља теренски рад у малим, изолованим друштвеним групама типа заједнице. Док нови објекти истраживања задобијају значај еквивалентан досадашњим, идеолошки и методолошки проблеми које доноси нова ситуација углавном су били постављени још у време ране антрополошке праксе. Нова пракса се можда може описати као усредсређеност на учеснике, уз претпоставку о неутралном гледишту „аутсајдера“; при томе, он доноси податке у релативно кратком временском року да би они могли бити анализирани на културолошки релевантан начин и били представљени у прихватљивој форми академске интерпретације.

Током осамдесетих година, епистемолошки преокрет у антропологији и њој блиским, етнографски усмереним дисциплинама, благовремено је критиковао емпиријски изражене фантазије, а затим и алегорије које окружују ово поље знања. Указао је на неуспех у правом ангажовању око проучаваних друштвених јединица у њиховим актуелним борбама, и готово да их је представљао у обмањујућем и политички неангажованом концепту времена, у „етнографском презенту“ (Fabian 1985).

Овај чланак истражује теоријске и методолошке импликације за етномузикологе који раде у градовима у којима и сами живе. Заснован је на потенцијалима и дилемама шестогодишњег истраживачког пројекта, спроведеног у Рију де Жанеиру, Бразил. Ово искуство је стечено кроз сарадњу једног академског колектива са невладином организацијом у Мареу (Maré), у окружењу угроженом свакодневним друштвеним насиљем, трговином наркотицима и друштвеним изопштењем.

Успоставивши стабилну и дуготрајну сарадњу академски образованих и оних без академског образовања, у истом истраживачком тиму – при чему сви они живе у истом граду, деле одређене погледе на своју територију и истовремено се међусобно супротстављају у вези са датим аспектима стварности, овај пројекат је отворио бројне нове перспективе репрезентовања друштвених група и њихових пракси у радовима, суштински ангажованог истраживања и у политичкој димензији научног рада.

(С енглеског превела Јелена Јовановић)

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